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No. 7

Persius, Juvenal, and St. Jerome on Old Age

It is interesting to see how St. Jerome, on the one hand, and Juvenal and Persius, on the other, looked upon old age; for Jerome too, in his own way, was a true satirist.

Persius was deeply impressed with the unpleasant side of old age,—its sorrow, its inconveniences, and its loss of the pleasures of youth. "The 'hoary head,'" says Gildersleeve in his comment on Persius's first satire, "is not a 'crown of glory,' but a sign of debauchery; the 'fair, round belly,' which is not uncomely in the elderly justice, is nothing but a swaggering paunch; the bald pate is not a mirror of honor, but a mirror of dishonor; in short, 'no fool like an old fool.'"¹

Juvenal's picture of the aged man is unquestionably distasteful:

How great, how unceasing are the miseries of old age! Look first at the misshapen and ungainly face, so unlike its former self; see the unsightly hide that serves for skin; see the pendulous cheeks and the wrinkles like those which a matron baboon carves upon her aged jaws in the shaded glades of Thabraca. The young men differ in various ways: this man is handsomer than that, and he than another; one is stronger than another: but all old men look alike. Their voices are as shaky as their limbs, their heads without hair, their noses drivelling as in childhood. Their bread, poor wretches, has to be munched by toothless gums; so offensive do they become to their wives, their children, and themselves, that even the legacy-hunter, Cossus, turns from them in disgust. (10, 190-204)²

In fact every sickness finds a dwelling in the miserable old man's frame.

Besides all this, the little blood in his now chilly frame is never warm except with fever; diseases of every kind dance around him in a body; if you ask of me their names, I could more readily tell you . . . how many patients Themison killed in one season . . . One suffers in the shoulder, another in the loins, a third in the hip; another has lost both eyes, and envies those who have one; another takes food into his pallid lips from someone else's fingers. (10, 217-229)

But a far worse calamity is a failing mind. Or, if this is spared him, his old age will be one long sigh of tribulation, when he sees his wife and children brought to death's door—a greater sorrow than any a Roman father could experience.

But worse than any loss of limb is the failing mind which forgets the names of slaves, and cannot recognize the face of the old friend who dined with him last night, nor those of the children he has begotten and brought up . . . And though the powers of his mind be strong as ever, yet must he carry forth his sons to burial; he must behold the funeral pyres of his beloved wife and his brothers, and urns filled with the ashes of his sisters. Such are the penalties of the long liver;

he sees calamity after calamity befall his house, he lives in a world of sorrow, he grows old amid continual lamentation and in the garb of woe. (10, 232-245)

The greatest misfortune incident to old age is, to Juvenal, the aged person's inability to enjoy the pleasures of his younger days.

St. Jerome looks at old age in a different light. Its inconveniences did not escape him; yet, like Cicero, he considered advanced years a blessing, because of the wisdom which they bring with them and because of the freedom they afford from the tyranny of the flesh, which is one of the chief obstacles keeping the devout soul from God. The following letter to the widow Furia, however, in which he describes her aged father, is not without its unpleasant touches.

Let your most noble father find in you his joy and support; let him learn from his daughter the lessons he used to learn from his wife. His hair is already gray, his knees tremble, his teeth are falling out, his brow is furrowed with uncomely wrinkles. Death is nigh, even at the doors: the funeral couch is all but laid out hard by. Whether we like it or not, we grow old. (*Ep.* 54, 14, 2)

Contrasted sharply with this is his delightful portrait of Paul of Concordia, a centenarian, who still possessed much of the hardihood of his youth.

Your eyes are bright and keen, your steps steady, your hearing good, your teeth are white, your voice musical, your flesh firm and full of vigor; your ruddy cheeks belie your white hairs, your strength is not that of your age. Advancing years have not, as we too often see them do, impaired your memory; the coldness of your blood has not blunted an intellect at once warm and wary. Your face is not wrinkled nor your brow furrowed. Lastly, no tremors palsy your hand or cause it to travel in crooked pathways over the wax on which you write. The Lord shows us in you the bloom of the resurrection that is to be ours. (*Ep.* 10, 2, 2-3)

To St. Jerome the most desirable benefits of old age are the wisdom that follows in its wake and the comparative ease with which old men overcome temptations of the flesh, provided they have not allowed themselves unrestrained licence in their previous life.

Almost all bodily excellences alter with age, and while wisdom alone increases, all things else decay. . . . Youth has to cope with the assaults of passion, and amid the allurements of the flesh is stifled like a fire among green boughs, and cannot develop its proper brightness. But the old age of those who have employed their youth in commendable pursuits and have meditated on the Law of the Lord day and night, acquires wisdom with the lapse of time; fresh experience and knowledge come as the years go by, and so, from the pursuits of the past, their old age reaps a harvest of delight. (*Ep.* 52, 3, 2-4)

St. Jerome did not, however, labor under the illusion

that this "harvest of delight" was one of unalloyed joy. He was too human not to know that every period of life has its shadows and its lights. His description of life's shadows is graphic.

Old age carries in its train many blessings and many inconveniences . . . Some of the apparent evils are frequent illness, a bothersome bronchial cough, dimming eyes, an acid stomach, tremors of the hand, teeth loosened from the gums and falling into the food that is being chewed. Add to these the torture of abdominal pains and the agony of gout and of rheumatic hands, which make it impossible even to hold a pen. The feet refuse to bear their burden; the activities of life can no longer be performed; the members are dead while the old man is still alive. (*Praef. in Amos*, 2)

But there are advantages in old age which far outbalance all the sufferings of the body:

But there are blessings too. Old age wrests us from the shameless grip of concupiscence. The weight of years moderates our appetite for food, it crushes the onslaught of passion; it enhances our wisdom and maturity of judgment. (*Ib.*)

He weighs the ills and the blessings of old age in the scales of his Christian faith, and strikes a balance as no pagan writer could have done:

Comparing the evils and the blessings, I will find it rather easy to bear the diseases of old age, if only I find myself freed from that one overbearing mistress—lust . . . Wherefore, when my locks are already like silver, I beg the Lord to let me merit as my companion that Wisdom of which it is written: "Take hold of her, and she shall exalt thee: thou shalt be glorified by her, when thou shalt embrace her" (*Prov.* 4, 8). (*Praef. in Amos*, 2)

In spite of his ill health from his youth onward, a condition which severe self-denial and utter disregard for the conveniences of life had aggravated, Jerome lived on past his seventieth year. As in the case of Paul of Concordia, whose vigorous old age the sage of Bethlehem regarded as a kind of earnest of the resurrection of the body, advancing years did not stunt Jerome's mind or memory. He claims, in his humility, that now that he had become an *asellus vetulus* (*Ep.* 152, 1, 3), his acute powers of mind had deserted him. In reality, he carried on his battle against heresy to the very end. His dialogues against the Pelagians were written only four years before his death; and during the entire last years of his life he continued to send letters of encouragement to his friends in all parts of the world. Jerome died in the harness—with pen in hand.

Years and experience also brought wisdom, the wisdom he had craved from the Lord. Youthful impetuosity had been tempered and changed into gracious mellowness. Forgiveness and a readiness to defer to the opinions of others were no longer difficult duties. Jerome was now an old man whom none could help loving. Long years of labor and penance and self-discipline had pruned away most of the eccentricities and defects of his character, until, standing upon the threshold of death, he could, with gratitude to God, look forward to the hour that would crown his ripe old age with a blessed immortality.

St. Marys, Kansas

HENRY W. LINN, S. J.

NOTES

1. Basil L. Gildersleeve, *The Satires of A. Persius Flaccus*; note on 1, 9. May we not perhaps assume that in this first satire Persius merely gives expression to his loathing of lewd old men, and that his caustic remarks do not reflect his attitude towards old age in general? At any rate in the same satire he calls Aristophanes "the grand old man"—*praegrandi cum senē*.
2. The translations from Juvenal are those of G. G. Ramsay in the Loeb Classical Library.

Prayer in the Cyropaedia

The Cyropaedia is neither history nor biography but an historical romance.¹ Xenophon's "chief purpose in writing the story of Cyrus was to give his people a picture of an ideal monarchy with an ideal monarch."² A study of the prayers scattered about the Cyropaedia will, then, reveal not the theory and practice of the founder of the Persian empire and his subjects, but the reasoned conviction of an educated and widely-travelled Greek gentleman of the Athenian middle class, as to the function of prayer in a perfect commonwealth.

Prayer is explicitly mentioned less than twenty times in the entire eight books of the Cyropaedia; yet, in spite of this fact, we seem, as we peruse this work, to be in an atmosphere of prayer. The impression grows on us that Cyrus and those near him lived on intimate, though reverent, relations with "Sovereign Zeus and the other gods." Such phrases as *σὺν θεῷ*, *σὺν τοῖς θεοῖς*, *πρὸς τῶν θεῶν*, and *ἐὰν ὁ θεὸς θελήσῃ*, recurring again and again in public addresses, private discussions and ordinary conversation, indicate a profound sense of dependence on the higher powers, and an almost instinctive dutiful turning to them for guidance and assistance in every circumstance of life. This impression is deepened by the constant seeking to learn the will of the gods through omens, and to secure their favor by libations, offerings of gifts, and sacrifices. It becomes evident that, on principle, no important step is ever taken without some previous expression of approval on the part of the gods. While usually in connection with these external acts of worship no explicit prayer is mentioned, it is all but evident that either some vocal prayer to the gods accompanied these religious rites, or that there was, at least, an interior raising of mind and heart to the gods, implied in attitude of body and outward ceremonial. Should we need any further assurance that in this ideal commonwealth prayer was habitual and the expression of an habitual attitude of mind towards the gods, we have it in the explicit statement that Cyrus "never failed to sing hymns to the gods at daybreak and to sacrifice daily . . ." (VIII, i, 23), "in order to set before his subjects, as their sovereign, a perfect model of virtue in his own person" (VIII, i, 21).

The prayers given in full in the Cyropaedia are addressed to "Zeus almighty" (*passim*), "Sovereign Zeus," "Zeus, the god of his fathers" (III, iii, 21-22). With Zeus are associated "ancestral Hestia" (I, vi, 1), "Helios" (VIII, vii, 3), and "the rest of the gods" (III, iii, 21). Yet while the supremacy of Zeus is clearly implied, need is also felt to propitiate the local deities. Accordingly on crossing the frontier, Cyrus prayed "to

the gods and heroes that dwelt in Assyria" (III, iii, 22), and "he called also upon the heroes who dwelt in Media and were its guardians" (*ib.*).

Prayers are offered anywhere and everywhere: in the home, on the field of battle, on the march, either where sacrifice is offered, or wherever one happens to be, but always reverently, with a sense of the nearness of the gods and of their majesty, and with a humble submission to their good pleasure. "Hear, I beseech thee, O Zeus almighty" (V, i, 29), "Grant me, I pray, almighty Zeus" (VI, iv, 9), are introductory phrases or addresses that may help to illustrate this attitude of mind.

The favor asked for in these prayers, while varying with circumstances, is never mere personal gratification or anything ignoble. The only apparent exception to this rule is Cyrus's prayer for the punishment of a deserter from his camp to Croesus: "Grant, O Zeus almighty, that it be mine to get him as I desire" (VI, iii, 11). But the condign punishment of a traitor was in those circumstances undoubtedly for the common good. It was in fact Cyrus's firm persuasion that the gods never granted anything unrighteous (Cf. I, vi, 6). Moreover he quite agreed with his father that it was contrary to the ordinances of the gods to do for man what man could and should do for himself (Cf. *ib.*). But guidance in campaigns, victory in war, the power to reward others, extraordinary qualities of mind and body, these are the special favors that the gods confer. And so the ideal commander "besought the gods to lead his army with their grace and favor, and to be mighty defenders, helpers, and counsellors for the common good" (III, iii, 21). Again, when a large contingent volunteers to accompany him on a dangerous enterprise, he pleads with the gods in a generous spirit of gratitude "that he himself might be enabled to reward them for this zeal of theirs" (IV, ii, 12). On another similar occasion, when the armies of different nations devotedly chose to remain with him, he broke forth into this heartfelt, grateful prayer: "Hear me, I beseech thee, Zeus almighty, and grant that in service to them I may surpass the honor they show me" (V, i, 29). Very similar are the prayers of his loyal friends, Gatas and Abradatas. The former, rescued from death by Cyrus and his army, pleads: "O Zeus, may the gods grant many blessings to these men and most of all to him who is responsible for their being so generous toward me" (V, iv, 14). The latter, while on his way to a post of extreme danger for which he had volunteered, and urged by his loving and beautiful wife Panthea to prove himself a gallant soldier, "laid his hand upon her head, and lifting up his eyes toward heaven prayed saying: 'Grant me, I pray, almighty Zeus, that I may show myself a husband worthy of Panthea and a friend worthy of Cyrus, who has shown us honor'" (VI, iv, 9).

But the gods do not grant prayers equally to all. It was Cyrus's conviction "that one is more likely to have power with them who comes to them in highest prosperity as well as in adversity" (I, vi, 3), "that one came to the gods with better heart to ask favors when

one had never neglected them" (I, vi, 4), and that, moreover, "only those who had made themselves what they ought to be had a right to ask for blessings from the gods" (I, vi, 5).

With all confidence, then, could Cyrus offer his final prayer to the gods. Faithful had he always been to his manifold duties; ever had he been mindful of the gods, whom in his dying moments he calls "eternal, all-seeing, omnipotent, who keep this ordered universe together" (VIII, vii, 22). With due propriety, then, does Xenophon put on the lips of his ideal ruler in mature old age the most perfect prayer in the *Cyropaedia*. It presents all the characteristic qualities of prayer that we have noted above. It is reverent, full of the sense of complete dependence on the gods, especially Zeus; it is grateful. It recognizes the power, the wisdom, the loving providence of the gods. Cyrus had been granted a vision in his sleep: a figure of more than human majesty appears to him in a dream and says: "Make ready, Cyrus, for thou shalt depart to the gods." On awakening he at once prepares the customary sacrifices, and while offering them, says: "O Zeus, god of my fathers, thou Helios, and all the gods, accept these offerings as tokens of gratitude for help in achieving many glorious enterprises; for . . . ye ever showed me what I ought to do and what I ought not to do. And I render heartfelt thanks to you that I have never failed to recognize your fostering care and never in my successes entertained proud thought transcending human bounds. And I beseech you that ye will now also grant prosperity and happiness to my children, my wife, my friends and my country, and to me myself an end befitting the life that ye have given me" (VIII, vii, 2, 3).

Looking at prayer in the *Cyropaedia* through the eye of a Christian, there are of course certain things which we miss in it, as for example the humility of the publican, the patient resignation of Job, the repentance of the prodigal son, and the tender love of the child of God towards his Heavenly Father. But if we take it as it stands, it is a remarkable testimony, both in content and in frequency of occurrence, to the piety, attested in many other ways, of the son of Gryllos and, in his person, to the religious mind of many another Athenian or Greek gentleman of similar circumstances in life.

Milford, Ohio

A. M. ZAMARA, S. J.

NOTES

1. A. Croiset, *Histoire de la Littérature Grecque*; 3d ed. (1921); Vol. IV, p. 421. Walter Miller, *Xenophon: Cyropaedia*; Loeb Classical Library; Vol. I, p. viii.
2. W. Miller, *ib.*, xii. All translations from the *Cyropaedia* given in this article are taken from the Loeb edition (with an occasional minor adaptation).

Classical learning, in men who act in conspicuous public stations, perform duties which exercise the faculty of writing, or address popular, deliberate, or judicial bodies, is often felt where it is little seen, and sometimes felt more effectually because it is not seen at all.—*Daniel Webster*

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Editorial

A short article in the March issue of the *Classical Journal* (Vol. XXIX, no. 6, pp. 450-452), entitled "How Much Is Latin?" contains some timely warnings for high-school Latin teachers of the present day. The author, Miss Grace Thomas, points out that the campaign of recent years to make Latin easy and interesting has led to the introduction of beginners' textbooks which, in the hands of unwary teachers, may do the cause of Latin more harm than good. We fully agree with the writer of the article that, whilst many of these books are extremely attractive, they often present the fundamentals of the language in such minimal and sugar-coated doses as to sacrifice all solidity and thoroughness. Moreover, matters extrinsic to the language itself, such as Roman history, antiquities, comparisons of ancient and modern life, and the study of English derivatives, to instance only a few of them, are sometimes so stressed as to become the real centre of interest to the young student. Hence one might well be tempted at times to raise the question: How much of all this is Latin? And if a great deal of it is not Latin, if most of it is not fundamental linguistic study at all, can we reasonably expect that it will produce the many excellent fruits which the champions of the classics so persistently claim for the study of Latin? Finally, "while a good knowledge of Latin unquestionably provides a background for English of invaluable worth," to quote the words of Miss Thomas, it is more than doubtful whether the easy Latin courses of some of these easy modern texts are of any substantial help to the serious study of English. We are in full accord with Miss Thomas when she insists that high-school Latin study, to be worth anything, must call forth strenuous effort on the part of the student. We think, however,

that she goes a little far when she maintains that Latin is "a subject which, in its elemental stages at any rate, is far from easy and indeed often far from interesting." The difficulty and the dryness of elementary Latin ought not, it seems to us, to be exaggerated. A really competent teacher, with a deep and wide knowledge of Latin, should be able to smooth away many difficulties and make the study of the language itself, its vocabulary, etymology, and syntax, genuinely interesting to the pupil at every stage. To make a thing interesting is not necessarily to turn it into play, and in order to arouse interest in a subject it won't do to kindle enthusiasm for something else: that is the moral of the tale. Let it be added, however, that we are, of course, duly grateful to the Latinists of the present generation for having made elementary Latin books look more inviting. We do not advocate going back to the forbidding textbooks of a bygone day. But—*est modus in rebus*.

Alleluja

(In Sabbatum Sanctum 1934)

Alleluja, dulce carmen,
Vox perennis gaudii,
Alleluja, vox beata
Civium caelestium,
Vox in atriis paternis
Resonans per saecula.

Alleluja, vox triumphans
Debellantis satanam
Christi, vitam reducentis
Perditis terrigenis,
Et pendentis caeli portam
Late nobis miseria.

Alleluja, vox paschalis,
Resurgentis jubilus.
Nobis ipsis vox praemonstrans
Resurgendi gloriam.
Stantium a dextris Regis
Alleluja canticum.

Alleluja, hic mortales
Te canentes exules
Ad felicem suspiramus
Et perennem patriam,
Ubi fratres Alleluja
Sine fine concinunt.

Cumque tandem revocamur
Terra de miseris,
Fratrum nobis turba victrix
Obvies canentium
Alleluja, caeli carmen,
Nostrum inde canticum.

F. S.

Literature has this advantage over every other species of art study, that everybody can examine the original masterpieces, and not depend on reproductions, as in the cases of painting, sculpture, and architecture; or on intermediate interpretation, as in the case of music. Today even a poor man can follow through centuries the thoughts of his ancestors.—G. H. Palmer

Twenty Minutes With the Greek Lyric Poets

(Read before the Department of Classics of the Missouri State Teachers Convention, at St. Louis, Mo., November 11, 1933)

The feelings with which the student of literature approaches the lyric poetry of ancient Greece ought to be akin to those with which the archaeologist gazes upon the shattered fragments of some work of pictorial art, expressed in the deathless colors of mosaic, a work that once had been vast and sweeping in its proportions and lovely in each separate part. Greek lyric verse, save for fragments and the more extensive remains of Pindar and Bacchylides, is lost. Yet just as the antiquary ponders with loving care over the multifarious bits of shattered mosaic, jealously treasuring each infinitesimal stone, and from tiny reconstructions, compellingly charming in themselves, achieves some imaginary view of what the awesome grandeur of the whole must have been: so the lover of literature cherishes the few fragments of Greek lyric preserved in grammarians and commentators and in sundry chance references, takes joy in their individual perfection, and allows fancy to sketch with wavering and indistinct pencil a picture of the whole that is gone.

Yes, for even these slight remnants we may be grateful and glad. The lyric verse of the Greeks is not a product of the childhood of a race, but of its vigorous maturity. For long centuries epic verse had held spell-bound the minds of men—epic with its joy in objective action and endeavor, with its calmness and majesty so well expressed by the stately hexameter measure, and with its idealization of a glorious past of heroes and demigods. Homer and Hesiod are not merely poets, but the names of an epoch.

But with the coming, say, of the eighth century before Christ, fundamental changes in government and in the social and political lives of Greek communities brought a new stimulus to the thoughts and experiences of the individual—and so lyric poetry, the voice of the individual man, was born. The word "lyric" means "poetry sung to the accompaniment of the lyre." The Greek *λύριος* is late, appearing first in the grammar of Dionysius Thrax, in the second century B. C. Today a wide usage of the term embraces what were to the Greeks themselves three distinct types: elegiac poetry, composed in the distinctive elegiac couplets; iambic poetry, again distinctive in metre and used often as a vehicle of assault and lampoon; and melic poetry, composed in a great variety of metres. A stricter use of the term "lyric" would limit its application to melic verse; but it is in the wider signification that the word will be employed in the present paper.

In the early seventh century B. C. the Greeks of Asia Minor, taking from their Phrygian neighbors a new and plaintive musical instrument, the flute, adapted words to be sung to its accompaniment. And thus Ionia first spoke the language of elegy. These same Ionians were the devisers of the metre to be employed in the new verse. They adapted for the purpose the old epic hexameter, by taking from each second verse one long

syllable in the third foot and another long syllable in the sixth, thus giving in each second verse the effect of a pentameter. The results of this modification were not only to bring about a writing in units of the couplet, but also to make each second verse a kind of after-thought, an expression of contrast or confirmation or meditation with reference to the preceding hexameter. As Jebb expresses it (*Classical Greek Poetry*, 110*): "Universally, the effect of the pentameter in the elegiac couplet is that, instead of sweeping the mind onward, as is done by a continuous flow of hexameter verse, it invites our thought to return upon itself; it gives a meditative pause, a moment of reflection."

At the head of the scroll of elegists stands Callinus of Ephesus, who lived in the stirring days when fierce Cimmerian hordes were threatening the cities of Asia Minor. In a trumpet voice he calls upon the Ionians to put by their sloth and their ease and to repel the invader:

And let every man cast his javelin once more as he dies.
For 'tis an honorable thing and a glorious to a man to fight
the foe for land and children and wedded wife; and death
shall befall only when the Fates ordain it.

Frag., 1, 5-13; (Edmonds's version).

A like strain is sung by the Spartan Tyrtaeus, whose *floruit* is set at 640 B. C. A persistent legend, as recounted, for example, by Pausanias in his Description of Greece (4, 15, 6), relates that the Spartans were bidden by the Delphic oracle to get "the Athenian" as an aid in their military operations; and that the Athenians, unwilling to aid the Spartans, and yet fearful of offending the oracle of Apollo, sent Tyrtaeus, a lame schoolmaster and seemingly a man of little good sense. But, it is related, the ardor of his inspired verses roused the might of his adopted fellow countrymen, and Sparta rose to new heights of glory under the stimulus of the lame bard.

In one fragment, dealing with the familiar motif *dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*, Tyrtaeus pictures the glory of the valiant and the disgrace of the recreant, concluding, to quote from Thomas Campbell's spirited translation, with a contrast between old age and youth dead on the field of battle:

Leave not our sires to stem the unequal fight,
Whose limbs are nerved no more with buoyant might;
Nor, lagging backward, let the younger breast
Permit the man of age, (a sight unblest)
To welter in the combat's foremost thrust,
His hoary head dishevelled in the dust,
And venerable bosom bleeding bare.
But youth's fair form, though fallen, is ever fair,
And beautiful in death the boy appears,
The hero boy, that dies in blooming years:
In man's regret he lives, and woman's tears;
More sacred than in life, and lovelier far,
For having perished in the front of war.

Frag., 7, 19-30; (quoted from Symonds, *Studies of the Greek Poets*, 1, 243).

This manly, martial spirit of older elegy encounters a strange contrast in Mimnermus of Colophon, an Ionian belonging to the close of the seventh century, and a

type of the luxury and softness of the Asiatic Greeks in contact with their Oriental neighbors. Though he wrote of war and of love and of romantic beauty, his characteristic tone is one of deep, almost whimpering melancholy, inspired by reflections upon the swift passage of the bloom of youth and the coming of old age.

One of his most pleasing fragments is his fanciful portrayal of the nocturnal journeying of the sleeping sun:

Surely the sun has labor all his days,
And never any respite, steeds nor god,
Since Eos first, whose hands are rosy rays,
Ocean forsook, and Heaven's high pathway trod;
At night across the sea that wondrous bed
Shell-hollow, beaten by Hephaestus' hand,
Of winged gold and gorgeous, bears his head
Half-waking on the wave, from eve's red strand
To the Ethiop shore, where steeds and chariot are,
Keen-mettled, waiting for the morning star.

Frag., 101-10; (Murray, *A History of Ancient Greek Literature*, 81).

We cannot pause to discuss in any detail the Middle Elegists, such as Solon the Athenian, who used his thundering couplets to rouse his compatriots to the conquest of Salamis, or in more meditative vein discoursed on problems of statesmanship and civic rectitude; or Theognis of Megara, who lived about the middle of the sixth century B. C., and whose fourteen hundred extant lines stamp him as primarily a gnomic poet. Yet I cannot refrain from quoting the remarkable lines in which the last-named bard promises an immortality of poetic fame to his young page Cynrus:

I have given thee wings to fly with ease aloft the boundless sea and all the land. No meal or feast but thou'lt be there, couched 'twixt the lips of many a guest, and lovely youths shall sing thee clear and well in orderly wise to the clear-voiced flute. And when thou comest to go down to the lamentable house of Hades in the depths of the gloomy earth, never, albeit thou be dead, shalt thou lose thy fame, but men will think of thee as one of immortal name, Cynrus, who rangest the land of Greece and the isles thereof—crossing the fishy unharvestable deep not upon horseback mounted but sped of the glorious gifts of the violet-crowned Muses unto all that care to receive thee; and living as they thou shalt be a song unto posterity so long as Earth and Sun abide.

Frag., 237-252; (Edmonds).

Related to the verse of the elegists and yet distinctive in its metrical movement and in its spirit was the *iambus*. No one can say with assurance why this verse was so called. But the Greeks, taking refuge in a pretty legend, used to relate that when Demeter was mourning the loss of her daughter Persephone, the first smile lighted her saddened face through the witty sallies of the maid Iambé. In any case, the beginning of the measure is ascribed to Archilochus of Paros, whose date is fixed by his reference to the eclipse of April 5, 648 B. C. Antiquity venerated him as the equal of Homer himself; and Plato, *Republic* 365C, called him "the prince of sages."

Archilochus used the iambic measure for fierce personal satire and invective, as well as for the expression of thoughts that did not involve lampoon. Nor did he confine himself to the iambic measure. In the following

fragment he sets the fashion for poets to wear their armor lightly—an example followed by Alcaeus, Anacreon, and Horace; for in an encounter with the hostile Thracians he threw away his shield. Professor Shorey has a delightful rendering:

Some Thracian strutteth with my shield,
For, being somewhat flurried,
I left it in a wayside bush,
When from the field I hurried.

A right good targe, but I got off,
The deuce may take the shield;
I'll get another just as good,
When next I go afield.

Frag., 6; (quoted from Wright, *A Short History of Greek Literature*, 86-87).

More serious is the following in trochaic tetrameters:

Tossed on a sea of troubles, Soul, my soul,
Thyself do thou control;
And to the weapons of advancing foes
A stubborn breast oppose;
Undaunted 'mid the hostile might
Of squadrons burning for the fight.

Thine be no boasting when the victor's crown
Wins thee deserved renown;
Thine no dejected sorrow, when defeat
Would urge a base retreat:
Rejoice in joyous things—nor overmuch
Let grief thy bosom touch
'Midst evil, and still bear in mind,
How changeful are the ways of humankind.

Frag., 67a; (version by William Hay, in W. H. Appleton, *Greek Poets in English Verse*, 114-115).

The critics of Alexandrine times placed three names in their "canon of the iambic poets." The first was Archilochus. The second was his younger contemporary, Semonides of Amorgus, whose date is about 625 B. C. For the modern world Semonides is most celebrated for his longest extant passage—one hundred and eighteen pessimistic lines in which he groups all women into ten classes, each class showing the characteristics of some one specimen of the animal kingdom. All make undesirable helpmates, save the class of those like unto the bee. Of such a woman the poet says:

Happy he that getteth her. On her alone alighteth there no blame, and life doth flourish and increase because of her; loving and loved groweth she old with her husband, the mother of a fair and name-honored progeny; she is preëminent among all the women, and a divine grace pervadeth her. . . . Such wives are the best and wisest that Zeus bestoweth upon men.

Frag., 7, 83-93; (Edmonds).

The writings of the elegiac and iambic poets, however, are lyric, as we have seen, in the larger sense only. It remained for the Aeolian and Dorian races to produce true lyric or melic poetry, the Aeolian, the song of the individual singer, or monodic poetry, and the Dorian, the chant of the great religious or triumphant chorus.

Terpander of Lesbos, of the late eighth century B. C., so story had it, converted the four-string lyre into an instrument of seven strings and established a school of singers. And it is in this little island that melic poetry

had its splendid origin. The Aeolians, says Symonds (l. c., 1, 307),

... played no prominent part in the struggle with Persia, or in the Peloponnesian war. . . . Yet for a certain space of time, the Aeolians occupied the very foreground of Greek literature, and blazed out with a brilliance of lyrical splendor that has never been surpassed.

The Alexandrine canon recognized nine melic poets, three of whom, Sappho, Alcaeus, and Anacreon, are singers of Aeolian or monodic song. Preëminent among the three, living in the early sixth century, was Sappho, whose name outshines in lustre that of any other woman of ancient Greece. All antique criticism is at one in ascribing to her verses naught but perfection, and to her every word an inimitable grace and peculiar charm. Hers is the Sapphic stanza, used later in so many of the odes of Horace.

Save for recently recovered and mutilated papyrus pieces, and fragments of several lines or less, we have only two relatively complete poems of any length by Sappho. Both are in the Sapphic metre. I present here the version of the first, the *Ode to Aphrodite*, in the rendering by Mr. H. Rushton Fairclough, with slight changes:

Richly throned, O deathless one, Aphrodite,
Child of Zeus, enchantress-queen, I beseech thee
Let not grief nor harrowing anguish master,
Lady, my spirit.

Ah! come hither. Erstwhile, indeed thou heardest
When afar my sorrowful cry of mourning
Smote thine ears, and then from thy father's mansions
Golden thou camest,

Driving forth thy chariot, and fair birds bore thee
Speeding onward over the earth's dark shadows,
Waving oft their shimmering plumes thro' heaven's
Ether encircling.

Quickly drew they nigh me, and thou, blest presence,
Sweetest smile divine on thy face immortal,
Thou didst seek what sorrow was mine to suffer,
Wherefore I called thee.

What my soul, too, craved with intensest yearning,
Frenzy's fire enkindling. "Now whom," thou criest,
"Wouldst thou fain see led to thy love, or who, my
Sappho, would wrong thee?"

"Though he flees thee now, yet he soon shall woo thee,
Though thy gifts he scorneth, he soon shall bring gifts;
Though he loves thee not, yet he soon shall love thee,
Yea, though unwilling."

Come, ah! come again, and from bitter anguish
Free thy servant. All that my heart is craving,
That fulfil, O goddess. Thyself, my champion,
Aid in this conflict.

*Frag., 1; (quoted from Robinson,
Sappho and Her Influence, 51-52).*

The second ode expresses in strikingly clear and glowing language the intensity of emotion of the lover. It is perpetuated in Latin verse in the adaptation made by Catullus in his fifty-first poem, expressing the exultant joy of the young poet upon his first meeting with

the bewitching Lesbia. There seems to be a strange significance in the fact that the Roman bard uses the Sapphic measure only twice, in this fifty-first poem and again in the eleventh, where heart-weary and disillusioned he phrases his stinging and final farewell to the same enchanting Siren.

We cannot pause for the multitudinous questions that even from ancient days come flooding like a great sea wave at the mention of the name of Sappho; nor can we defend her name from the vile aspersions made by the ancient comic poets. Let us leave her with words of tribute phrased in her own Sapphic measure by the poet Swinburne:

Ah the singing, ah the delight, the passion!
All the Loves wept, listening; sick with anguish,
Stood the crowned nine Muses about Apollo;
Fear was upon them,
While the tenth sang wonderful things they knew not.
Ah the tenth, the Lesbian! the nine were silent,
None endured the sound of her song for weeping;
Laurel by laurel,

Faded all their crowns; but about her forehead,
Round her woven tresses and ashen temples
White as dead snow, paler than grass in summer,
Ravaged with kisses,

Shone a light of fire as a crown forever.

Sapphics, 25-37.

Alcaeus of Lesbos was an older contemporary of Sappho, the son of a noble family of Mytilene, where he flourished as early as 612 B. C. He took an active part in the stirring and revolutionary events of the day. In verse he is the inventor of the Alcaic four-line stanza so much favored by Horace. For English readers, the metre is best seen in Tennyson's *Milton*, the fourth stanza of which runs as follows:

Where some refulgent sunset of India
Streams o'er a rich ambrosial ocean isle,
And crimson-hued the stately palmwoods
Whisper in odorous heights of even.

The extant fragments of Alcaeus reflect his consuming concern with the politics of his day and isle, and include as well numerous snatches of drinking songs, which express his praises of wine, his reflections upon life, and his descriptions of the seasons. Every reader has admired Horace's *Vides ut alta stet nive candidum Soracte*, the ninth ode of the first book. The original by Alcaeus is spirited and fresh; Symonds, not attempting the Alcaic metre, presents a rhymed version:

The rain of Zeus descends, and from high heaven
A storm is driven:
And on the running water-brooks the cold
Lays icy hold:
Then up! beat down the winter; make the fire
Blaze high and higher;
Mix wine as sweet as honey of the bee
Abundantly;
Then drink with comfortable wool around
Your temples bound.
We must not yield our hearts to woe, or wear
With wasting care;

For grief will profit us no wit, my friend,
Nor nothing mend:
But this is our best medicine, with wine fraught
To cast out thought.

Frag., 90-91; (quoted from
W. H. Appleton, l. c., 116).

The third of the Aeolian singers was Anacreon of Teos, who though an Ionian by birth and temperament, yet cultivated the lyrical stanza of personal emotion. His *floruit* is 540 B. C. A tincture of flippancy may be detected in his verses, and his emotions were light and passing rather than deep-set and ardent. Love and wine are the themes of his song. Anacreon was immensely popular in antiquity, and in succeeding centuries a great corpus of imitations of his lighter verses grew up, the so-called *Anacreontea*. In substance light and flimsy, these later verses are at times exceedingly graceful, fanciful, and charming. Here are some lines from the dainty apostrophe to the Cricket:

Sweet Cricket, here's a health to you,
While on the high tree-top you sing,
Made merry with a drop of dew,
As happy as a king.

For all the landscape hath is yours
Whate'er in farm or field you see;
And all the gifts of all the Hours
You hold in simple fee.

Anacreontea, 34; (Edmonds).

A graver and loftier note is struck in the great Dorian contribution to melic verse, the choral ode. There are mighty names among the choral singers. Six of the melic poets on the Alexandrine canon are of this school: Aleman of Sardis, of the early seventh century; Stesichorus of Himera, "arranger of choruses," who lived from 640 to 550 B. C.; Ibycus of Rhegium, with *floruit* in 544 B. C., whose legendary murder and strange avenging have given rise to the proverbial "cranes of Ibycus"; Simonides of Ceos, pan-Hellenic poet, who lived from 556 to 467 B. C.; his nephew, Bacchylides of Ceos, a singer almost utterly lost to the modern world, until in the closing years of the nineteenth century a manuscript of the poet containing more than a thousand lines was found among the Egyptian papyri; and finally Pindar of Thebes, from 522 to 448 B. C., whose numerous extant writings, including for the most part *epinicia* or odes of victory in athletic games, represent for us the culmination of classical lyric.

To modern taste the chanting by a choral group of stately verse perhaps detracts somewhat from the more individually personal and spontaneous elements which we associate with the term lyric. Yet I cannot forbear to touch for just a concluding moment on some of the great achievements of these choral bards. Every reader marvels at the master's touch revealed in the consummate restraint and proud loveliness of the encomia of Simonides; like that tribute to the Three Hundred that fell at Thermopylae:

Of those that died at Thermopylae glorious is the fate and
fair the doom; their grave is an altar; instead of lamenta-

tion, they have endless fame; their dirge is a chant of praise.
Such winding sheet as theirs no rust, no, nor all-consuming
time, shall bring to naught. *Frag.*, 5; (Symonds, l. c., 1, 332).

Or that other, one of the most celebrated passages in Greek literature, in which Simonides reveals his genius for the pathos of romance. It is the prayer of Danaë, cast adrift with her babe upon the sea:

When, in the carven chest,
The winds that blew and waves in wild unrest
Smote her with fear, she, not with cheeks unwet,
Her arms of love round Perseus set,
And said: O child what grief is mine!
But thou dost slumber, and thy baby breast
Is sunk in rest,
Here in the cheerless brass-bound bark,
Tossed amid starless night and pitchy dark.
Nor dost thou heed the scudding brine
Of waves that wash above thy curls so deep,
Nor the shrill winds that sweep,—
Lapped in the purple robe's embrace,
Fair little face!
But if this dread were dreadful too to thee,
Then wouldst thou lend thy listening ear to me;
Therefore I cry,—Sleep, babe, and sea, be still,
And slumber our unmeasured ill!

Frag., 13; (Symonds's version, quoted
from W. H. Appleton, l. c., 124-125).

Renowned, too, are the praises of peace by Bacchylides:

Moreover great Peace bringeth forth for men wealth and
the flowers of honey-tongued songs, and for gods the yellow
flame of the burning of the thighs of oxen and fleecy sheep
upon fine-wrought altars, and for the young a desire for
disport of body and for flute and festal dance. Meanwhile
in the iron-bound shield-thong hang the warps of the brown
spider, headed spear and two-edged sword are whelmed in an
ever-spreading rust, and the noise of the brazen trumpet is
not; nor is reft from our eyelids that honey-hearted sleep
which soothes the spirit towards dawn. The streets are abloom
with delightful feasting and the hymns of children go up
like a flame.

Frag., 7; (Edmonds).

Strangely close, on this eve of Armistice Day, if we but cast our thoughts back some fifteen years, is this yearning for peace. . . . But now the winds of the centuries have lashed the structures of Greek cities, and desert sands have overwhelmed them. Fallen are the palaces, decayed and lost the stately mansions. And over the scenes of glorious victories naught but Memory survives to weave anew the story. Yet at even-tide a strange peace returns; and under the witchery of the night Nature may be again not unlike the long ago. Once more may come that sense of quiet awe and rest that the poet Aleman felt in the valley of Eurotas:

The summits of the mountains are sleeping, and the ravines,
the headlands, and the torrent courses, the leaves that the
black earth nourishes, and all creeping things, the wild crea-
tures of the hills, and the race of bees, and the monsters in
the depths of the dark sea; and sleep is upon the tribes of
wide-winged birds.

Frag., 58; (version of R. C. Jebb, in *Growth
and Influence of Greek Classical Poetry*, 132*).

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*Quoted from the Macmillan Co. edition.

